



*United States Attorney
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**UNITED STATES MILITARY PILOT AND MASTER SERGEANT PLEAD
GUILTY TO IMPORTING NARCOTICS ON UNITED STATES AIR
FORCE AIRCRAFT**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and JOHN GILBRIDE, Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration's New York Field Division, announced today that Captain FRANKLIN RODRIGUEZ and Master Sergeant JOHN FONG, of the United States Air National Guard, pleaded guilty to narcotics charges in Manhattan federal court.

The charges to which the defendants pleaded guilty were the result of an international investigation into importation and distribution of 3, 4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine, commonly known as "MDMA" or "Ecstasy." As set forth in the Indictment, on April 12, 2005, RODRIGUEZ and FONG flew from Germany to Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh, New York, aboard a United States Air Force C-5A "Galaxy" cargo aircraft on which they had hidden more than 200,000 Ecstasy pills. RODRIGUEZ also stored Ecstasy pills and approximately \$725,000 in cash in his apartment in the Bronx, New York, and RODRIGUEZ and FONG stored approximately 60,000 Ecstasy pills in an automobile in Tampa, Florida.

RODRIGUEZ and FONG each pled guilty this afternoon before United States District Judge JOHN G. KOELTL to one count of conspiring to import Ecstasy into the United States and one count of conspiring to possess and distribute Ecstasy. As part of his plea, RODRIGUEZ admitted importing the Ecstasy pills and storing approximately \$726,000 in cash derived from the crimes at his apartment. As part of his plea, FONG admitted importing the

Ecstasy pills and storing additional pills in his car in Florida.

At sentencing, RODRIGUEZ and FONG each face a maximum sentence of 20 years' imprisonment on each of the two counts and fines of as much as \$1,000,000, or twice the gross gain or loss resulting from each of these offenses. RODRIGUEZ also agreed to forfeit \$750,000, and his BMW to the United States Government. RODRIGUEZ and FONG are both scheduled to be sentenced on August 25, 2006, at 10:00 a.m., before Judge KOELTL.

Mr. GARCIA praised the diligent efforts of the Drug Enforcement Administration and the members of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force. Mr. GARCIA also thanked Brigadier General Dana Demand and his staff at Stewart Air National Guard Base, the United States Air Force, Office of Special Investigations, and the United States Department of Defense, Defense Criminal Investigative Service, for their assistance.

Assistant United States Attorneys SCOTT L. MARRAH and DANIEL L. STEIN are in charge of the prosecutions.

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